CULTURE AS A DETERMINANT OF CHILD ABUSE IN NIGERIA: A CRIMINOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

Macpherson Uchenna Nnam
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine culture as a determinant of child abuse in Nigeria within the context of criminology. The basic principles of culture conflict theory formed the theoretical framework for this paper. Child abuse is more common in a society where harmful cultural practises hold sway and/or are entrenched than otherwise. This social problem is attributed to the unwise acceptance and application of Western culture and civilisation. Although it may be advantageous to the 'abusers', child abuse in reality has profound negative implications for a child's and societal growth and development. Child abuse results in severe social, psychological, economic, physical, educational and medical problems. The paper recommends, among other things, that the Nigerian government and civil society groups should on a regular basis organise town hall meetings and interactive sessions with traditional rulers and relevant community-based associations so as to identify, review/refine, and abolish possible harmful cultural practises in their various communities.

Keywords: Child Abuse, Criminological Standpoint, Culture, Determinant, Nigeria**.**

Introduction

Child abuse and neglect refers to the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened (Keeping Children and Families Safe Act, 2003 cited in Imo, 2015). Child abuse and neglect is the maltreatment of children by parents, friends, caregivers, or other parent bodies. Child abuse cuts across all racial, ethnic and religious groups and exists in all strata of the society. Sadly, it is most children who are considered to be in need of protection that have been abused by family members, friends or acquaintances or hired caregivers (Imo, 2015). What then is the criminological standpoint or perspective on child abuse in Nigeria? In keeping with the criminological parlance, we define child abuse as any act or omission to act, including a socialisation process or disciplinary measures in a given culture, religion and environment which is inimical to the social, political, mental, economic, psychological, moral, medical, educational and physical growth and development of children and the society in general. It is clear that the crime of child abuse is usually perpetrated by someone who is closely affiliated or attached to a child. Such relatives could come from the significant others in society: parents, guardians,

caregivers, older siblings, teachers and the clergy. This implies that the crime of child abuse is rarely perpetrated by (total) strangers in society.

Children under the English Common Law were considered as 'property' owned by the parents, particularly fathers, who had great latitude over the treatment and discipline of their children. Such legal view was eventually incorporated into the early laws in the United States (as applied or operated in Nigeria) as well (Al-Shail, Hassan, Aldowaish & Kattan, 2012). Abuse by strangers is much less common whether in modern or in traditional societies. Abuse of children is widespread in poor countries of Africa (including Nigeria), Asia and Latin America where 'child labour' (a cultural practise which encourages children to be hard-working in order to support their family income) is part of the 'maltreatment' (socialisation processes) children experience as they grow. Child abuse also exists in advanced countries of Europe, North America and rich Asian countries, but in a minimal level (Imo, 2015).

By implication of the above viewpoint, child abuse exists in both developing and developed nations of the world. Nonetheless, the difference only lies in the approach; the involvement of the latter in the act of child abuse is not culturally determined as tenable in the former, especially Nigeria. This is in view of the fact that some acts that are considered to be child abuse in the eyes of the Western world may be a way of life (culture) in some African societies like Nigeria–hence crime relativism and cultural relativism. For instance, it is still a common practise in our society for poor or lower class parents to place their children/wards under the care of a perceived wealthy relative or even a non-relative resident in cities, hoping to see these children trained either in school or trade and ultimately improve their familial standard of living. Olateru-Olagbegi and Ikpeme (2006) attested that the age-old form of 'internal child trafficking' (given out children to either a direct or indirect family member for sponsorship) is usually confused with the traditional cultural practise of child fostering within the extended family system. But it should be noted that such children and wards are not adequately cared for– they are consciously or unconsciously abused and exploited–as they are subjected to different forms of slave-like labour in exchange for money and sexual gratification.

Historically, mistreating children at the hands of parents or caretakers has a long history across cultures (Al-Shail *et al*., 2012); from ancient times to the present, many societies (including Nigeria) have exercised what is recognised today as child abuse for various reasons (Sari & Buyukunal, 1991). Despite the fact that child abuse has existed for a long time in Nigeria, it has not been given the desired attention by the Nigerian government. And this may have accounted for the less attention the act has also received from educators, administrators, social workers, counselling psychologists, sociologists, criminologists and even politicians (Momoh, Aigbomian & Longe, 2008). Only recently has child abuse received recognition as a social problem in Nigeria (Imo, 2015). This paper supports and contributes to the body of existing knowledge on child abuse by specifically linking the core of the problem to some cultural observances. Culture and child abuse are both sociological and criminological terms which mean different things to different people. The two concepts are relative to time and place as well as depend on the background of individuals stating the problem. In essence, however, there is a serious check in cultural practises that are characterised by abuse or that influence child abuse in Nigerian societies.

Appalled by the increasing rate of child abuse in Nigeria, incisive awareness campaigns have been launched by all levels of government in Nigeria, civil liberty groups, human rights activists, religious bodies and scholars of social problem. These bodies or stakeholders work towards propagating laws, intervention programmes and providing measures that would protect children and other vulnerable groups in society. Fatokun (2007) is of the view that child rights are widely recognised and protected by legislations and constitutions in many countries of the world (including Nigeria). In an effort to alleviate the plight of Nigerian children, the Federal Government of Nigeria passed the Child Rights Act (CRA) on 31st July, 2003. This law was specifically made to protect Nigeria children from any form of abuse and neglect. It incorporates all the rights and responsibilities of children and consolidates all laws which provide for the protection and care of Nigerian children into a single Legislation. The Act stipulates, among other things, that no Nigerian child shall be subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse or neglect, maltreatment, torture, inhuman or degrading punishment, and attacks on his/her honour or reputation. Every Nigerian child is entitled to rest, leisure, and enjoyment of the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health (see also CRA, 2003). The following three objectives where developed to dissect the problem of this paper: (1) to examine the influence of culture on child abuse in Nigeria using culture conflict theory as a framework, (2) to identify the multiple aetiology of child abuse in Nigeria, and (3) to determine the problems associated with child abuse in Nigeria.

The Influence of Culture on Child Abuse: A Theoretical Framework
The central tenets of culture conflict theory were adopted in this paper to examine the influence of culture on child abuse in Nigeria. Culture conflict theory is part of the social processes theory. This theory was propounded by Thorsten Sellin in 1938. Simply put, culture is an acceptable way of life in a particular society or setting. It encompasses the customs and traditions of the people or an organisation, including their beliefs, ethos, ethics, etiquette, 'modus operandi' (mode of operation), and vision and mission. Culture conflict occurs as people interact with one another and in their course of pursuing individual goals. It takes place as individuals adhere to rules of behaviour which completely opposed the collective sentiments of the society (shared norms, core values, and moral and cultural beliefs of the larger society). Little wonder therefore that Siegel (2008: 151) argued that "culture conflict is as a result of exposure to opposing norms, attitudes, and definitions of right and wrong, moral and immoral".

Because reactions to social rules and laws are not uniform across cultures, people constantly meet others who hold different views on the utility of obeying the legal code. Some people admire others who may openly disdain or flout the law or ignore its substance. People experience what Edwin Sutherland called 'culture conflict' when they are exposed to opposing attitudes towards right and wrong or moral and immoral (Siegel, 2008). Sellin (1938) identified two types of culture conflict–primary and secondary–both of them have different but complementary attributes. The primary culture conflict simply means a clash of cultures. It occurs when two cultures meet and each refusing to give way for the other to prevail or one condemning the other and trying to assume superiority. The secondary culture conflict results from the changes in traditional values, resulting from globalisation and modernity as well as

cultural diffusion and adoption. The two culture conflicts have a strong bearing on child abuse in Nigeria.

Another typical example of primary culture conflict occurred in the colonial Nigeria, where and/or when the British culture clashed with the indigenous culture. The British government in Nigeria outlawed the institutionalised cultural practise of human sacrifice and killing of twins among the Igbo ethnic group in the old Eastern Nigeria; present-day South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria (see also Igbo, 2007). Indeed, twin babies in Nigeria were either killed or thrown into the 'evil forest' while their mothers were subjected to all kinds of indignities for given birth to 'devil incarnates' (twins). Again, it was an acceptable native culture in Nigeria to appease the gods of the land and atone for sacrilegious or abominable acts using human beings. A case in point is the popular and true account of the present 'Ume' and 'Osu' (societal pariahs or outcastes) syndrome in Igbo society, which has it that these people came into existence as a result of child abuse. The earliest 'Ume' and 'Osu' people are human beings (mainly children) who were thrown into the evil forest or dedicated to an 'Agbara' or 'Arusi' (deity) for life–as the custom demanded–but survived the ordeal and then intermarried, commenced procreation and survived through to the present-day Igbo society.

However, Western culture frowned upon, outlawed and completely abolished the said cultural beliefs in Nigeria on the grounds that it contravenes moral, humanitarian and international laws; it is a clear violation of human rights. In the forefront of this abolition movement in Igbo and Efik cultures was a female missionary of the Church of Scotland Mission (now Presbyterian Church) named Mary Slessor. Igbo (2007) stated that Western morality and formal legal system in Nigeria have now made it a criminal offence for anyone to engage in these acts of abuse (e.g. twin-killing and dumping of unwanted children in the bush or elsewhere). This development is a clear clash of two cultures, hence culture conflict theory. It is equally observed that killing or subjection of certain people, especially children and other vulnerable groups in the society to inhuman treatment is not peculiar to Igbo nation. A similar pattern of abusing children was also common in the Yoruba culture and other tribes in Nigeria. According to Olasupo (2012), trafficking in human parts for ritual purposes was a phenomenon common in the pre-colonial days in Yoruba land but still predominant today. Human organs of both male and female children trafficked by ritualists and traditionalists include human head, eyes, sex organs, hearts, etc. The 'Obas' (Yoruba Kings) use human beings, especially children or their organs to appease some deities and as sacrifice for installing a new 'Oba' (King), Olasupo decried. It then stands to reason that many Nigerian children are abused, killed and their body organs removed for both ritual and money-making purposes. Most of them are children entrusted to close older family members, friends and acquaintances to provide proper and meaningful tutelage, care and supervision as well as economic, moral and social supports.

Secondary culture conflict, on the other hand, occurs in both homogeneous and heterogeneous societies. This arises when a simple culture becomes complex as a result of enculturation and acculturation such as undue or unwise internalisation of Christianity, western education, sophisticated science and technology (particularly Information and Communication Technology, ICT), globalisation and other modernity trends in our ever-changing and runaway world. From the criminological point of view, all these and other Western inventions are both determinants and antidotes to social problems (like child abuse) in human society. Therefore,

caution should be applied when adopting, assimilating and applying these developments. Nnam (2014) lamented that a remarkable number of traditional secret societies (which is an institutionalised cultural and religious observances) in Nigeria are gradually losing their potency and efficacy owing to Western culture and civilisation, Christianity precisely (and thereby given room for criminalising or labelling certain acts as child abuse or human rights violation). Igbo (2007) averred that secondary culture conflict is associated with modern, industrial society where different groups with different conduct norms emerge and flourish. The State passes laws which often outlaw some of the cherished conduct norms of such groups. Thus, whenever the conduct norms of the larger community clash with those of a small group, there is a secondary culture conflict.

A classical example of secondary culture conflict as illustrated in the preceding paragraph is the age-long traditional secret societies in Igbo culture. For instance, the people of Afikpo in Ebonyi State of Nigeria practise 'Ogo Cult'–a highly revered and clandestine traditional secret society where boys of adolescent age (children) are resocialised and get initiated into manhood, or else they will not marry. Pupils and students are pulled out of school to undergo this adventurous rite of passage that is characterised by regimentation and rigorous initiation ceremonies. Teenage girls (children) were not left out of this cultural bondage, child abuse. They were forced under culture to undergo unscientific and agonising genital surgery popularly called female genital mutilation or female circumcision, early or child marriage to support the family economically and financially, denied formal education, etc. All these cultural ceremonies cut across traditional Nigerian societies; however, they are rarely practised presently. Unlike before, these acts are currently seen and treated as child abuse by the government, human rights activists and faith-based organisations.

In the global climes, the phenomenon of child abuse can be explained using both primary and secondary culture conflict perspectives. In the ancient Greece culture, for instance, fathers practised infanticide, whereby many infants who had any serious malformations were killed in order to preserve the race characteristics. Even Greek physicians during the second century were in the habit of advising midwives to examine each newborn and to get rid of those who were considered not fit to be raised (Sari & Buyukunal, 1991). Child sexual abuse was a common cultural practise among the Eskimos. The Eskimos present their daughters to their guests as an act of hospitality and the death of those children during their first sexual experience was not a rare event. In Indian culture, the girls used to get married very early because it was considered disgraceful and abomination for a girl to remain unmarried until the time of menstruation (Al-Shail, *et al*., 2012). There are so many cultural observances in Nigeria which fall foul of the current legal framework and constitute human rights violation of high propensity that are still widely practised in contemporary Nigeria. These cultural practises are, among others, encouraging children to work hard by engaging them in numerous and strenuous domestic chores, act of discipline through beating and scolding, sending them to the street to hawk and sell wares in order to augment their family income, giving them out to caregivers as house helps for pecuniary motives. All these, to a large extent, constitute various forms of child abuse in the formal legal system–but a norm–an acceptable and legally approved way of life in traditional Nigerian societal settings.

The Multiple Aetiology of Child Abuse in Nigeria

There is a vast array of factors that give rise to child abuse in Nigeria. Under a given cultural milieu, poverty, social exclusions, ignorance and illiteracy may drive or predispose certain individuals to either consciously or unconsciously abuse children. Aderinto and Okunola (1998) reported that some children were pushed into street hawking for maintenance needs of their family. These children are 'breadwinners' of their various families at their early age. And, sadly, it is a common sight in Nigeria to see children aged 5-16 years pushing trucks for money, hawking, working as bus conductors and beggars when they are supposed to be at school learning. Admittedly, such institutionalised cultural practises as giving birth to many children for agricultural and other wealth-generating purposes, female genital mutilation (or circumcision), child marriage and the old practise of twin-killing are tantamount to child abuse in the eyes of the law. Specifically, the culture of female genital mutilation is "a traditional practise that involves cutting or altering the female genitalia as a rite of passage or for other socio-cultural reasons" (Mohammed, Ali & Yinger, 1999: 14). This common culture is practised in 28 African countries (including Nigeria) and in about 20 Middle Eastern and Asian nations (Jekayinfa, 2004 citing Population Reference Bureau, 2000).

The nature of socialisation given to children by the adult population and the type of family or neighbourhood under which they are socialised determine whether a child will be abused or not. Since such children are intentionally or intentionally exposed to abusive conditions, they may grow up to see the learnt behaviour as normal and an acceptable practise to reckon with in life. Ezeoke, Awam and Enekwe (2009) stated that unstable families and some cultural ceremonies increase the propensity for child abuse while marital instability, domestic violence, poor parental relationship, quarrels and clashes of interest can lead to decreased responsiveness and less parent-child relationships. These authors illustrated that parents who are under pressure may transfer their aggression, social strains and environmental pressures to their children (hence child abuse). Mba (2003) rather suggested that changes in financial conditions, employment status and unhealthy workplace may disrupt family stability. The stress caused by such changes can lead to child abuse and neglect of varied dimensions and magnitude.

Conditions or factors that lead to the abuse of children are multiple, but relative. Some family members have demonstrated individual or group psychopathology in their abusive actions than other family members. Psychopathology, on its own or coalesced with other abnormal personality traits or social aberrations, may precipitate child abuse (see also Ajala, 2009). Parents who were abused or neglected as children are more likely than other parents to abuse their own children and wards; however, they may justify their actions by claiming that this act is part of socialisation. Lack of good parenting skills, unrealistic expectations about a child's capabilities, ignorance of ways to manage a child's behaviour and abnormal child development may further contribute to child abuse and neglect (Erikson, 1996). Accordingly, child abuse is traceable to unfriendly socio-cultural conditions, unhealthy familial relationships, and physically and socially disorganised environment. However, elements of both psychopathic personality or obsessive family pathologies and environmental strains are common among child abusers. On the contrary, these stressful socio-cultural and severe psycho-medical conditions could push affected adult population to abuse the younger population.

The cause of child abuse is intrinsically linked to a serious breakdown in cultural values and social norms, resulting from the ever-growing conflict between tradition and modernity/globalisation trends such as urbanisation and industrialisation. Both Western and African scholars lent credence to this notion; for instance, Domiya (1995) as recorded in Momoh *et al*. (2008) attributed the cause of child abuse to the breakdown in traditional values, poverty and attempts to make ends meet. These factors drive parents and guardians to indulge in the unwholesome practise of subjecting their children and wards to hawk, farm and involve in other loathsome commercial activities in order to break even. Haralambos and Holborn (2008) affirmed that the development of urban centres (commercial and industrial precisely) has destroyed the traditional sense of community that is associated with rural villages, thus undermining the informal mechanism of social control and giving room for crimes (like child abuse). Nwadiaro and Nkwocha (2011) reaffirmed that the rapid urbanisation which was necessitated by industrialisation of the urban centres has given rise to different kinds of crime (like child abuse and neglect).

The predictor of child abuse in Nigeria is also linked to our religious belief. In the Northern part of Nigeria, for instance, the cultural practise of 'Almajiri' (Islamic student beggars) is a prime example of religious-motivated child abuse practise in the country. This act is a strongly acceptable practise among Muslims in the Northern Nigeria. As a religious culture, these Islamic students ('Almajiri') either engage themselves or someone else engages them in 'street begging' (in the name of soliciting for arms). These children roam the streets, constituting public nuisance and consequently are predisposed to antisocial conducts and abuse (for a similar argument, see also Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme, 2006).

Problems of Child Abuse in Nigeria

There are many problems associated with child abuse in Nigeria. Child abuse has short and long-terms negative implications on the social, psychological, emotional, economic, educational and medical well-being of victims. Children are compelled to hawk by their parents, guardians or caregivers and are, sometimes, severely punished for their inability to finish the amount of goods or article of trade apportioned to them to sell for the day. Terr (2010) explained that child abuse interferes with a child's ability to develop meaningfully. An abused child consistently demonstrates socially undesirable behaviour and is usually nonconformist in the society. The child may display a multiple psychological and behavioural problems as well as experience a difficult time developing and maintaining healthy relationships. This maladjusted behaviour in turn increases the risk of long-term decreased productivity, long-term economic dependency and generally lowers a child's level of satisfaction with life as an adult.

Thousands of children are engaged as a house help, or are placed under the care of a relative who engage them in various forms of forced labour on farms, factories and private homes or establishments. A representation of this fact is the case of a-4-year old child in Abakaliki (the Capital of Ebonyi State, Nigeria) who was brutally battered on the forehead by his uncle's wife for frequent defecation (Editorial in Citizens' Advocates, 30 August, 2009, Pp. 1-5). A shocking video-clip of a-twelve-year old male child in the same town was on several occasions (between November and December, 2015) displayed on Ebonyi Cable Television (ECTV). This child was bathed with hot water by a woman he renders services to as a house

help on the grounds that he cooked excessive yam. The victim was admitted and abandoned in the Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki (FETHA).

Moreover, other daily personal observations revealed that child abuse exists among secondary school students in Nigeria. As once a part-time teacher and National Youth Service Corps teacher in secondary schools that are located in the Southern and Northern Nigeria respectively, the author of this paper observed with dismay and chagrin that many students indulge in hawking within and outside the classrooms. These students sell their articles of trade within the school premises and, sometimes, during lesson hours or class period. They are given snacks, groundnuts, candies and church-related items to sell at school. By implication, such students pay little or no attention to their academic activities. Or perhaps, despite the seriousness and natural intelligence of such students, the affected students would only succeed in paying a divided attention to their studies which invariably impedes academic success and progress. No wonder Heady (2000) postulated that children who work as well as go to school may find themselves less able to learn, resulting from exhaustion or insufficient time to complete both school and home homework.

Furthermore, some students are temporarily withdrawn from school or made to play truancy by their parents or guardians during planting and harvesting seasons in order to engage them in subsistence agriculture or farming, which is a major occupation in many rural areas in Nigeria (informal and personal observation of the researcher as once a secondary school teacher in the country). This development, according to Obaji (2003), adversely affects the academic performance of students and retards the growth and development of such a child as well as prevents him or her from achieving full functionality in later life. Oluwole (2002) commented on the situation whereby children are used (whether in or against their own volition) for house helps instead of being sent to school. He then described the situation as a major obstacle to the achievement of Education-For-All (EFA). Adduced in this paper is the fact that child abuse, if allowed to continue unabated, will torpedo the Federal Government of Nigeria's efforts and plan of achieving or reaching the global goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) for all by 2015-cum-2020.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), according to Momoh *et al.* (2008), estimated that 95% of children who are under the age of 15 are engaged in an unpaid family work. In Edo State and other parts of Nigeria, such family workers are also engaged in street hawking, farm-handling, shop-keeping, etc. This situation is usually as a result of economic and financial incapacitation of parents to provide the basic necessities of life (see also Domiya, 1995 cited in Momoh *et al.*, 2008). In virtually all Igbo societies in Nigeria, children are often seen in markets and on the high streets trading or engaged in dehumanising commercial activities to support their families economically. The trend is particularly worrisome in major commercial and industrial Nigerian cities, including all the State Capital Territories in the country, such as Kano, Owerri, Port Harcourt, Abakaliki, Onitsha, Obolo Afor, Lokoja, Aba, 9th Mile Corner, Ore, and the like. It is a common sight in these urban, commercial centres to see children doing menial jobs in factories and industries; darting around the highways and express roads, selling wares while some are now into prostitution and organised begging.

The aftermath of child abuse is so devastating that it is usually difficult, if not, impossible for an affected child to regain his/her normal personality and social identity which

have been insulted, damaged, brutalised, injured, condemned, destroyed, labelled and stigmatised over time. Such children, Ubom (2003) argued, experience a wide range of personality disorder. Some of them grow up to hate their parents, become harlots, Casanovas, school dropouts, armed robbers, drug addicts and traffickers as well as show evidence of nervousness, depression and psychosis. Ocholi (2003) stated that sexually abused children suffer from sexual disorder, isolation, stigma, guilt, distrusting others, poor self-esteem and self-concept deficiency. Specifically, sexually abused children suffer physical, emotional and social problems that can interfere with their ability to live healthy and productive live. They may contract sexually transmitted infection such as reoccurrence of urinary tract infection known as Visco Vaginal Fistula (VVF) (common with women who undergo cultural circumcision or genital mutilation, early or child marriage, prolonged labour under traditional/unscientific healthcare services, etc).

Abused children generally could develop suicidal behaviour, refuse discipline or abuse others. The long term effects of child abuse include fear, anxiety depression, anger, hostility, inappropriate sexual behaviour and poor self-esteem (Evans, 2004). Child abuse, especially child sexual abuse is of particular concern because children who have been abused experience a long list of symptoms, including fear, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), behavioural problems, sexualised behaviour, among others (Jonzon & Lindblad, 2005). Accordingly, child abuse in this context can be describe as any act or omission to act which violates the inalienable rights of children, jeopardises their chances of growing and developing positively as well as threatens their safety valve for survival or succeeding in life. Child abuse is a socio-psychological or psychosocial problem which gives rise to other societal problems–it leads to different kinds of deviance, delinquency, crime and sin in society. Khamal (1985) as recorded in Aguene (1998) affirmed that in joining bad gangs, street fighting, visiting gambling places and vagrancy with the intention to commit crime are rampant among those young girls and boys (children) roaming and hawking on the streets, hence child abuse.

Conclusion

The paper aimed at articulating the issue of child abuse with obnoxious cultural practises in Nigeria. Child abuse is not only a violation of a child's rights but also a cultural practise which predisposes a child to conditions that are likely to cause him or her social, physical, psychological, medical, academic and economic pains. Here, a child is forced to accept any cultural practise that may have negative implications on his or her growth and development. As our society becomes more complex, sophisticated, scientific, globalised and technology-driven, the meaning, nature and extent of its crime problem become escalated and socially constructed and reconstructed over time. The implication is that some activities or duties assigned to children in many African societies, which were acceptable and lawful at one point in history, are now criminalised and labelled as child abuse or neglect. In traditional Nigerian setting, for instance, hawking and assisting parents in farm works and house chores or domestic services by children were not seen as abusive or illegitimate acts. It is rather an art of socialisation or skill acquisitions/trade required of a typical Nigerian child so as to contribute and assist in improving the economy of their respective families and communities. Nonetheless, this common cultural practise in Nigeria has been challenged by the imposition of Western culture and civilisation.

The underlying principles of culture conflict theory were used to strengthen and support this article. The theory offers a significant insight into the institutionalised cultural processes that drive many Nigerians to, consciously or unconsciously, abuse their children and wards. In fact, the incidence of child abuse in Nigeria is a corollary of harmful cultural observances. Efforts were made to identify and bring to the fore some salient multiple factors that are responsible for child abuse in the country. Among these causes of child abuse are ignorance, poverty, social exclusion, breakdown in societal norms and values. Besides, the prevailing influence of some cultural beliefs and ceremonies in Nigeria is the most serious determinant factors. It was discovered that child abuse has negative effects on the medical, psychological, economic, educational and social growth and development of affected children, their families and the wider society. Relevant ideas of scholars, stakeholders and policymakers in child abuse reviewed herein, coupled with the contributions of the researcher, provided further impetus for articulating the policy implication of this article, as clearly delineated in the recommendations.

Recommendations

The foregoing discussions enabled the researcher to draw these recommendations:

- All levels of government in Nigeria (Federal, State and Local) should advance forward-looking strategies to expedite the fight against, poverty, social exclusion, ignorance and illiteracy in the country. This development is a futuristic measure that will dissuade and deter parents, guardians and other family members from giving out their children/wards to perceived wealthy individuals who, rather than training them in school or trade as promised, abuse and exploit them at will for personal domestic and economic enrichments or gains. It will also reduce the rate at which parents, guardians and caregivers push children/wards entrusted in their care to hawk or get involved in farm and menial jobs as well as other debilitating activities with a view to augmenting their family income.

- The Federal Government of Nigeria, through its various agencies, civil society groups, faith-based bodied and concerned individuals, should on a regular basis organise town hall meetings and interactive sessions with such traditional associations as Council of Traditional Rulers (CTR), age grade associations and other relevant community-based institutions so as to identify, review/refine and abolish cultural practises or ceremonies that violate human rights.

- Acquisition of qualitative education is invariably a sure way to Damascus–it improves the quality of life by liberating educated persons from abject poverty, cultural bondage, social exclusions and ignorance of human rights and dignity–all these attributes in one way or another give rise to child abuse. The therefore recommends that the Child Rights Act (CRA) should be taught to Nigerian children both at school and at home to enable them understand their rights and when such rights are infringed upon without reasonable explanations or justifications. With this enlightenment campaign in place, children will be able to stand on their dignity and thus make them less vulnerable and duly protected against abuses.

- Regular and timely sensitisation of members of the public on both electronic and print media using the official language of Nigeria (English) and 'Pidgin English'

(popularly known as Broken) as well as indigenous languages or dialects such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, among others will certainly reduce the incidence of child abuse in the country to a large extent.

References

Aderinto, A. A. & Okunola, R. A (1998). Push-pull and sustaining factors of child labour in Nigeria. *Ife International Journal, Vol. 6* (1): 178–184.

Aguene, U. (1998). *Social change and social problem* Enugu: Prize publisher.

Ajala, E. O. (2009). Detrimental effects of child abuse on the educational development of children in Oraukwu community in Anambra state, Nigeria. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice, Vol. 1* (3): 98–111.

Al-Shail, E., Hassan, A. M. Aldowaish, A & Kattan, H. (2012). The cultural reinforcers   of child abuse. Available form: http://cdnintechopen.compdfs-   wm/37763.pdf.   Accessed 26/09/2015.

Child Rights Act (2003). The Child's Rights Act: provisions, application and you. Available   from: http://www.hdinigeria.org/CRA%20Provisions%   20Application%20and%20You-   Printed%20Version.pdf. Accessed 26/09/2015.

Editorial. (2009). A-4-year old boy battered for defecating too often. *Citizens' Advocate,* August 30, Pp. 1–15.

Erikson, E. (1996). *Childhood and society* Available from: http://www mortonpublishers.org. Accessed 26/09/2015.

Evans, G. W. (2004). The environment, childhood, and poverty. *American Psychologists, Vol. 59*: 17–92.

Ezeoke, A. C., Awam, S. N, & Enekwe, C. (2009). The agonies of abused children in Nigeria; counselling intervention as a way out. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practise Vol*. *1* (3): 69–82.

Fatokun, K. V. F (2007). Child abuse and the educational attainment of secondary school students in science subjects. *Journal of Research in National Development, Vol. 5* (2): 1596–8308.

Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: themes and perspectives (7th ed.)* London: HarperCollins.

Heady, C (2000). *What are the effects of child labour on learning achievements: evidence from   Ghana*. Italy: United Nations Children's Fund, Innocent Research Centre Florence.

Igbo, E. U. M (2007). *Introduction to criminology (Rvd. ed).* Nsukka: AFOR-ORBIS Publications.

Imo, N. A. (2015). Working with emotionality and sexually abused children: the therapeutic value of effective communication. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences, Vol. 8* (1): 151–161.

Jekayinfa, A. A. (2004). Types, causes and effects of gender-based violence: challenges for social studies education. *Gender Discourse, Vol. 1*(1): 13–21.

Jonzon, E. & Lindblad, F. (2005). Adult female victims of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 20*: 651–666.

Mba, A. I. (2003). The problem of child abuse in Nigeria. *Edited conference proceedings*, Pp. 79–82.

Mohammed, A., Ali, N. & Yinger, N. (1999). *Female genital mutilation: programmes to date: what works and what doesn't.* Geneva: World Health Organisation Press.

Momoh, S. O., Aigbomian, D. O. & Longe, B. O. (2008). Students' perception of the prevalence, forms and causes of child abuse in Edo state, Nigeria. *Investigaciones-REOP, Vol. 19* (1): 5–11.

Nnam, M. U. (2014). Secret cult menace in Nigeria within the context of social structure and political economy: a critical analysis. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences, Vol. 9* (2): 171–180.

Nwadiaro, E. C. & Nkwocha, D. I. (2011). Kidnapping for ransom: a prevalent urban pandemic in Nigeria. *Research Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies, Vol. 1*(1): 18–28.

Obaji, R. O. (2003). Child labour as perceived by the victim. *Guardian News paper,* December 18, P. 12.

Ocholi, E. F. (2003). Nigerian and poverty: counseling intervention for poverty education and psychological stability. *Edited conference proceedings*, Pp. 92–95.

Olasupo, F. A. (2012). Trafficking in women and children in Yoruba land: the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial situations compared. *Global Journal of Human Social Science Arts & Humanities, Vol. 12* (11): 49–63.

Olateru-Olagbegi, B. & Ikpeme, A. (2006). *Review of legislation and policies in Nigeria on human trafficking and forced labour.* Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

Oluwole, G. (2002). House helps and madam. *The Punch Newspaper*, October, P. 20.

Sari, N. & Buyukunal, S. N. (1991). A study of the history of child abuse. *Pediatrics Surgery International, Vol. 6*: 401–406.

Sellin, T. (1938). *Culture conflict and crime*. New York: Social Science Research Council.

Siegel, L. J. (2008). *Criminology: the core (3rd ed.)*. Belmont, California: Thomas Higher Education.

Terr, L. (2010). Childhood trauma: an outline and overview. *American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 148*: 10–20.

Ubom, U. (2003). Child's sexual abuse in Nigeria: problems and solutions. *Child Sexual Abuse Project Newsletter, Vol. 1* (2): 10–12.